

Halloween Crafts Made Easy



Techniques to Save On Your Notecase

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Introduction

Everyone has their favorite holiday – and for many people Halloween is absolutely IT! They love decorating their yards with ghoulish recreations of graveyards and haunted houses. Pumpkin carving is an art form. Costumes are planned years in advance.

I have a good friend who has a Halloween party every year that is the blow-out of all blow-outs! Her whole entire house was transformed into a haunted house – she even created a maze for the kids in the basement complete with ghouls jumping from corners and everything.

What impressed me the most about her Halloween decorations was that almost all of them were hand made by her over the course of a year, Of course, she would save them from year to year until eventually her collection of Halloween décor almost required a storage room of its own.

Now a lot of people think they aren't crafty enough to make their own Halloween decorations or costumes. Nothing could be further from the truth. Anyone at all can make some fun and cute – or scary, depending on your preference – decorations for Halloween.

Think of it this way – even Kindergartners make Halloween crafts, so if they can do it, so can you! All you need is a little guidance, very little know-how, and some great instruction! That's what we're here for!

After reading this book, you'll realize that Halloween crafts don't have to cost a lot of money and can be done by the whole family. Of course, some of the projects will require a little extra expertise that can't be done by little hands, but others are perfect for kids and can make for some great family together time.

There's no need to spend a lot of money to decorate your home and yard for Halloween or even to have a "killer" Halloween costume. You can make anything you want with a little creativity and even some common household items.

Halloween is a fun time of the year. The crisp fall air brings about thoughts of football games, hot apple cider, and trick or treating. We think that once you realize how easy and fun it is to make your own Halloween decorations, you'll start embracing this holiday the way others have.

Let's start with a brief history of Halloween.

Chapter 1 - The History of Halloween

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Many people think that Halloween is a “devil worshipping” holiday celebrated by people who don’t believe in God, but the truth is that Halloween really has its basic origins in the Catholic Church. Halloween means “All Saints Eve” or “All Hallows Eve”.

All Saints Day is a religious holiday observed by the Catholic Church and set aside for worship of all the saints in heaven. They used to consider it with all solemnity as one of the most significant observances of the Church year

The American origin of Halloween extends further from the Celts celebration of Samhain (pronounced sow – in) which is a Druidic festival made to celebrate the end of the harvest. As with a lot of Celtic lore, faeries were thought to be extremely active at this time as they ushered in the winter.

Celts believed that on the night before the “new year”, the boundary between the worlds of the living and the dead became blurred. On the night of October 31, they celebrate Samhain. It was on this day that they believe the ghosts of the dead returned to Earth causing trouble and damaging crops.

Celts felt that the presence of the otherworldly spirits made it easier for the Druids – Celtic priests – to make predictions about the future. For a people entirely dependent on the natural world, which could be quite volatile, these prophecies were an important source of comfort and direction during the long, dark winter.

During the celebration, the Celts wore costumes – typically consisting of animal heads and skins – and they tried to tell each other’s fortunes. They would build huge sacred bonfires where people gathered to burn crops and animals as sacrifices to the Celtic deities.

When the celebration was over, they re-lit the fires in their hearths which they had put out earlier that evening. The fires would be re-lit with flame from the sacred bonfire to help protect them during the coming winter.

While Halloween is generally thought of as a Pagan festival, back in the days when All Hallows Eve was celebrated, it was considered a religious rite by the people of the time. They felt it was very important to pay homage to the Gods that they thought ruled their world. Remember that long ago, people had very different beliefs than what we hold today.

As you can see, there are some similarities to modern-day Halloween festivities and the ancient Celtic celebration – bonfires and costumes. And there is much more than that when you really delve into the various customs and rituals.

Over the years, the Halloween we know and celebrate today has evolved in various ways. With the influx of immigrants coming into America in the 1800 and 1900's, we began to see Halloween take on various parts of traditional Halloween celebrations in other countries that would meld into what we know it as today.

For example, the Irish would think of October 31st as “Mischief Night” and play pranks on their friends, neighbors, and family. These pranks were harmless. Favorites were tipping over outhouses and unhinging fence gates. Of course, storytellers would put these pranks on the shoulder of mythical faeries, elves, and witches, lending to the mysterious nature of Halloween itself!

As for the history of the most popular part of Halloween – trick or treating – there are a few schools of thought. It is originally thought that trick or treating stemmed from a practice in the middle ages where poor people would go from

door to door begging for food in exchange for prayers for the dead on All Hallows Day.

However, most scholars believe that trick or treating is actually an American invention that came about in the 1930's. The practice of pranking had, by this time, become actually a little violent with some real destruction to property taking place.

Many people – the Boy Scouts of America included – wanted to encourage people to find a more constructive alternative to pranking. While there is no historical evidence to prove this conclusively, most people believe this is how trick or treating came about.

What about that time-honored tradition of carving pumpkins making them into jack-o-lanterns? There's a history behind that too! The carved pumpkin lit by a candle inside is one of Halloween's most prominent symbols.

Although there is a tradition in Great Britain and Ireland of carving a lantern from a rutabaga or turnip, the practice was first named and associated with Halloween in North America where the pumpkin was available. American pumpkins were (are) also larger and much easier to carve. Most families who celebrate Halloween carve a pumpkin into a frightening or comical face and place it on their home's doorstep after dark.

The carved pumpkin is also called a jack-o'-lantern and its history can be traced back to the Irish story of Stingy Jack known as a greedy, gambling, hard drinking old farmer who tricked the devil into climbing a tree. Stingy Jack then trapped him up in the tree by carving a cross into the trunk of the tree.

In revenge, the devil places a curse on old Jack which dooms him to wander the Earth at night for eternity. For centuries, this bed time parable was told by Irish

parents to their children which is why they began to carve turnips placing a candle inside to symbolize Jack's curse.

In America, the tradition of carving pumpkins have preceded the Great Famine period of Irish immigration and the tradition of carving vegetable lanterns may also have been brought over by the Scottish or English. However, documentation is unavailable to establish when or by whom. The carved pumpkin was associated generally with harvest time in America and did not become specifically associated with Halloween until the mid to late 19th century.

So, you can see that the Halloween traditions we know today have their essential roots in folklore and past celebrations from other cultures. At this point, we feel like we should address one of the biggest myths associated with Halloween – that it is only for Satanists and Devil worshippers. That is simply not true.

Halloween is a Pagan holiday and not a Satanic holiday. It is important to distinguish between Paganism and Satanism. People who are Pagans believe in more than one God. They do not worship the devil, make human sacrifices, or disbelieve in a Higher Being. They simply believe that there are many Gods instead of one.

While you, personally, may disagree with that, if we look at modern religion, you will find many that believe in this same tenet – worshipping different entities – right down to the Catholic Church who worship saints although they don't worship them as Gods but just as God-like.

However, this book isn't a religious debate. It's an informational book, and you should know that Halloween has evolved into more of an entertainment holiday than anything else. While its roots do lie in ancient rites, these days, Halloween doesn't worship Satan, doesn't conjure up witches, and doesn't make ghosts "come out of the woodwork" just because it is October 31st.

The mystery, though, is what intrigues a lot of people along with the chance to be playful, scary, and transform themselves into something they aren't in everyday life. That is why so many people love to dress up, have parties, decorate their homes and revel in being ghoulish, in general!

Want to know how people around the world celebrate Halloween? Some do, some don't, but it can be really fascinating to know how various cultures pay homage to All Hallows Eve.

Chapter 2 - Halloween Around The World

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Some people really love Halloween. This writer is a “Halloween baby” and so this time of the year always has a special meaning for me. My birthday parties were always Halloween themed, and, until I was much older, I really thought that everyone dressed up and went trick or treating so they could bring me candy for my birthday!

Some cultures celebrate Halloween and others don't. But it can be fascinating to look at the traditions of different countries when it comes to Halloween. After all, we don't all celebrate things the same way – and Halloween is no different! Let's start where much of the holiday began.

Ireland

The belief is that Halloween originated in Ireland and, as we've said previously, was known as “Samhain Night”. This festival celebrated the end of the harvest season and ushered in the winter.

They spent the evening of October 31st dressed in costume celebrating around bonfires and paying homage to the Druid Gods that were hoped to keep them safe throughout the long winter.

Today, in Ireland, adults and children dress up as creatures from the underworld. The costumes range from ghosts, ghouls, zombies, witches, and goblins. They light bonfires and enjoy spectacular fireworks displays even if in some places fireworks are illegal.

The children walk around knocking on the doors of neighbors to gather fruit, nuts, and sweets for the Halloween festival. At one time, salt was sprinkled in the hair of the children by their neighbors in order to protect them from evil spirits.

Houses are decorated with carved pumpkins or turnips that sports scary faces and a candle is placed inside the hollowed out fruit to light and decorate. The Irish also decorate their homes to celebrate this holiday.

Many people still bake a traditional Halloween cake called a barmbrack which is fruit bread. Each member of the family gets a slice of the cake. Great interest is taken in this tradition as there is a piece of rag, a coin, and a ring in each cake.

If you get the rag, then your financial future is doubtful. If you get the coin, you can look forward to a prosperous year. Finally, if you are lucky enough to get the ring, it is a sure sign of impending romance or continued happiness.

During the Halloween celebrations in Ireland, games are played such as bobbing for apples where apples, peanuts, along with other nuts, fruit, and small coins are put into a basin of water. The apples and peanuts float. The coins are harder to catch since they sink.

Everyone takes turns catching as much as can be caught using only their mouth and no hands. In some houses, the coins are pushed into the fruit for the children to “earn” as they catch each apple. Apple bobbing is popular in America as well.

The Scottish and English also have taken this tradition into their own Halloween customs with a game named ducking. It is named after the fast movement of a person’s head under the water to try and get a prize without having the head under water for too long.

Another popular Halloween game involves trying to eat an apple that is hung from the ceiling on a string. The catch here, just as with apple bobbing – or ducking – is that the participant cannot use their hands.

In Ireland, children have a week-long break from school for Halloween. In fact, the last Monday in October is a public holiday give for Halloween even though October 31st and this holiday do not necessarily coincide.

Scotland

The Gaelic culture and language has been shared between Scotland and Ireland and thus both countries have celebrated the festival of Samhain for centuries. They both celebrate Samhain to mark the end of the harvest season and the beginning of winter.

Halloween in Scotland consists chiefly of children going door to door “guising” – dressed in disguise often as a witch or ghost and offering entertainment of various sorts. If the entertainment is enjoyed, the children are rewarded with sweets, fruits, or money. Even though there is no official trick or treat in Scotland, it is obvious that this custom gave rise to the popular trick or treating we enjoy today.

In Scotland, a lot of folklore revolves around the belief in faeries. Halloween is no different. Children dress up in costume and carry around a “Neepy Candle” which is a devil’s face carved into a hollowed out Neep which is a rutabaga or yellow turnip. They light the Neepy Candle from the inside to frighten away the evil faeries. This, of course, is much like us in North America carving pumpkins and lighting them from the inside.

Popular children’s games played on Halloween include “dookin” for apples – retrieving an apple from a bucket of water using only the mouth. In many places, this has been replaced by standing over the bowl holding a fork in the mouth and releasing it aiming to skewer an apple. Another favorite game is trying to eat a

sugar coated scone hanging from the ceiling on a piece of string while being blindfolded.

England and Wales

In the Fifth and Sixth centuries, the native Celts were pushed North and West into Britain by the Anglo-Saxon invasions. This sent the Celts to present-day Wales, Scotland, and Cornwall, and they brought the festival of All Hallows Eve with them. In 835, All Saints Day was fixed on the First of November and then in 998, on November Second.

On All Souls Eve (Halloween), families sat up and little “soul cakes” were eaten by everyone. At the stroke of midnight, there was silence with candles burning in every room to guide the souls back to visit their earthly homes. A glass of wine was set on the table to refresh them on their journeys.

This tradition continued in some areas of northern England as late as the 1930’s with children going from door to door “souling” for cakes or money by singing songs. They would receive treats as rewards for their caroling.

Halloween and the associated holidays of All Saints Day, etc. didn’t always fall on October 31st as we now know. In the 16th century, the English reformation transferred Halloween practices such as the building of bonfires were switched to the 5th of November.

Halloween celebrations in the United Kingdom were re-popularized in the 1980’s with influence from America. That saw the reintroduction of traditions such as pumpkin faces and trick or treating.

Between 2001 and 2006, Halloween became the third most profitable holiday for retailers in the UK. Today, adults and children alike will dress up to attend fancy dress parties, pubs and clubs on Halloween night.

In some places of England, there is a similar festival called holy day which falls on the 4th of November. Children play tricks on adults ranging from the minor to the more serious. Pranks include taking garden gates off their hinges and then maybe throwing them into ponds or taking them a long distance away. In recent years, some of these tricks have turned into severe acts of vandalism and criminal damage including street fires and destruction of private property.

Children also make jack-o'-lanterns by carving faces or designs into hollowed out pumpkins and then illuminating them from within. They are then displayed in windows keeping with the night's theme of fright and horror. Before the introduction of pumpkin carving from America, the British used to carve rutabagas or yellow turnips instead and this is still done in some areas.

As in many others parts of the world, bobbing for apples is a well-established custom on Halloween synonymous with the Scottish "dukin". Apples are put into a barrel that was filled to the brim with water and an individual would have to catch an apple by catching them in their mouth without using their hands.

Once an apple was caught, it was traditional to peel the apple and toss the peel over one's shoulder in hopes that the strips would fall into the shape of a letter. Whatever letter the peelings arranged into would be the first initial of the person's true love.

According to another superstition, the longer the peel, the longer the peeler's life would be. Some also say that the first to get an apple would be the first to marry.

Other Halloween festivities in England include fireworks, recounting ghost stories and playing children's games like hide and seek. Apple tarts may be baked with a coin hidden inside and nuts of all types are traditional Halloween fare.

Some more adventurous children may play a game called "thunder and lightning" which involves knocking like thunder on a neighbor's door and running away like lightning. This game is known by several names including knock-door-run, knock-and-run, knock-knock-zoom-zoom, ding-dong-ditch or postman's knock and is played on Mischief Night.

Just as with many traditions, they slowly change over the years as new games and activities are added or taken away. A majority of children in England today will arrive at a door and yell trick or treat for money and sweets to be given out – just as in America.

There has been a growing concern in England about the potential for anti-social behavior caused at Halloween, particularly as caused by older teens. Cases of houses being attacked by "egg-bombing", especially when the occupants do not give children money or gifts, have been reported. The BBC reports that beginning in Halloween, 2006, police forces have stepped up patrols to respond to trouble such as this.

Mexico

For our neighbors to the south in Mexico, Halloween is a 21st century phenomenon which is mostly confined to the larger urban areas. The celebrations are obviously influenced by American style and traditions. These include children dressing up in costumes and visiting neighborhood houses searching primarily for candy.

Though the “trick or treat” motif is also used, trucks are not generally played on those houses not giving away candy. Older crowds of teenagers and adults will sometimes organize Halloween-themed parties though the observance of the Halloween party on the night of October 31st is sometimes changed for the nearest available weekend.

In Mexico, Halloween also starts off three days of consecutive holidays as it is followed by All Saint’s Day and then the Day of the Dead, or Dia de los Muertos. Since Mexico is primarily a Catholic country, some of the first explanations give to children on the holiday followed a more traditional Catholic and Mexican theme.

This explanation – which is also sometimes used by groups opposed to Halloween in attempts to discredit the holiday – is that during October 31st, all of the evil spirits are welcomed into this world. On November 1st, all of the saintly spirits make a visit to this world, and then on November 2nd all of the spirits who have died come. It is rare to find someone in Mexico who will be able to identify Halloween’s primarily Pagan roots.

Australia and New Zealand

In the southern hemisphere, spring is in full force at the end of October, and the days are rapidly growing longer and brighter. This does not mesh well with the traditional Celtic spirit of Halloween which relies on the atmosphere of the encroaching darkness of winter. That is what Halloween came from originally, after all – ushering out the harvest season and bringing in the winter.

However, Halloween has recently gained a large amount of recognition in Australia and, to an extent to New Zealand as well. This can be attributed to American cultural media influences. In 2006, Australian costume shops reported

a rise in sales on Halloween themed costumes. On Halloween night, horror films and horror themed episodes of certain TV series are aired for the tradition.

If you are planning on going to Australia or New Zealand around Halloween time, you will need to prepare in advance because most of the celebrating is done at private parties. Trick or treaters are usually supervised by adults and they stay in their own neighborhoods for safety reasons. It actually is a practice that is carried out by pre-arrangement with nearby neighbors.

Tricks are not played in Australia, and treats are wrapped and sealed “lollies” or lollipops that remain sealed for safety reasons. They are usually given to children only by known neighbors and friends. Giving of treats to children beyond this may be greeted with suspicion or even hostility by parents and is actively discouraged by Australian law enforcement.

If trick or treaters do go beyond these culturally accepted norms, it is mainly in the form of anti-social behaviors by small groups to cause mindless destruction. This is similar to issues we see in the United States on Halloween as well as in the United Kingdom.

The destructive behaviors have little to do with community building Halloween practices associated with Europe and the USA. Such destruction, perhaps, reflects broader and more unpleasant societal issues like unemployment, boredom, or a lack of preparedness to accept social responsibility. In other words, those who cause this type of destruction are rebels looking to turn their inner anger elsewhere.

Such anti-social actions like these performed in Australia when associated with Halloween are widely frowned upon and have led to a sense of hostility in some places. Critics say that this type of “trick or treating” is little more than an excuse

for the mindless copying of American customs with little relevance in Australian society.

In America, we do have certain acts of vandalism and violence that take place around Halloween time. In Australia, this type of vandalism has been known to target school and community buildings, cemeteries, or places of worship. Such actions have routinely led to police investigations, but they are regarded as little more than petty crimes and often juvenile based.

Because Halloween has been largely thought of in Australia as an American custom, many people in Australia do not celebrate Halloween. They feel that celebrating this holiday reflects a cultural neo-imperialism of the United States through the influence of highly popular media. Some emphasize that their hostility to Halloween reflects a wider refusal to have anything to do with what they feel is senseless or commercial Americanisms.

There are many countries and cultures that do not celebrate Halloween, but with the influx of Americans moving about the world, often, they are introduced to the customs and warm to the concept though it is not a global holiday at all. As you can probably tell, Halloween is generally a European and North American holiday.

So there you have a brief history of Halloween as well as a general idea of how those around the world celebrate this holiday. Now, it's time to get down to "business". How do YOU make your Halloween celebration the best it can be without spending a lot of money? It's easier than you think!

Chapter 3 - Halloween Crafts

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Even if you've never been much of a crafter, you can still make some great Halloween crafts that you can use to decorate your home and make the holiday festive. Halloween evokes images of spooky ghosts, black cats, evil witches, and flying bats. You can recreate many of these images with fun and easy crafts.

The best part about making Halloween crafts is that it is something that the whole family can do and it can give you some time to spend together. Many Halloween crafts can be made by almost any age child. Even your toddler can help out and learn new skills like cutting, drawing, and coloring.

We are going to give you a whole bunch of ideas for Halloween crafts. Many of them can be made out of common household items which means you won't have to spend a lot of money on craft supplies. Believe it or not, you can turn an ordinary plastic grocery bag into a spooky ghost and an egg carton into an ominous bat.

Of course, you will need a few crafting supplies from the store. We suggest keeping some on hand for future craft projects as well. Here is a list of basic craft items that are good to keep a supply of:

- Various colors craft paint – black, white, green, orange, etc.
- Pipe cleaners
- Googly eyes
- Hole punch
- Fun foam in various colors

Of course, most households will have standard craft supplies like scissors, tape, and glue. If you don't have these, though, you will need them as well. If you find

that you will really get into crafting, this list will grow, but this is enough to get your started.

One thing we want to tell you about crafting with kids is to be patient with them and don't expect perfection from their work. The whole idea of crafting with kids is to spend time with them and have fun.

An art teacher of mine once said there's no such thing as perfection in art – just discoveries. This is especially true for children. Even a toddler's scribbling can be art, so have a good time and enjoy the togetherness.

So, let's get started and give you some amazing ideas for fun and easy Halloween crafts. Be prepared – it's going to be fun!

Chapter 4 - Bats and Spiders and Such

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Egg Carton Bat

For this craft, you will need a clean egg carton. You can use either a Styrofoam or a cardboard one, but if you want to hang your bats outside from the trees, the Styrofoam ones will be better.

Cut out three of the egg cups keeping them attached together. Cut out the front and back of the two outside cups. This will form your bat's wings. Paint your bat black with craft paint. Again, if you want to hang them outside, you will want to use waterproof paint. Once the paint is dry, you can paint on a scary face with white paint or glue on googly eyes.

Use a pair of scissors to poke a hole in the top of the middle cup. Take a piece of string and make a knot large enough that it won't pull through the hole and put the string in the hole. Now you have your egg carton bat ready to be hung from wherever you want. Make several of these for maximum spookiness!

Here's what your bat should look like:



Egg Carton Spider

You can also use an egg carton to make a spider. For this craft, you just need to cut out one of the egg cups from the carton. Paint your spider black and wait for it to dry. Paint on eyes or glue googly eyes on him.

Use the tip of pointed scissors to make four small holes on each side of the egg cup. Insert a pipe cleaner in each of the holes and twist the pipe cleaners from the inside to form a knot of sorts so the pipe cleaners do not come out of the holes. Then bend the legs so your spider will stand on his own.

Here's what your spider should look like:



Clothespin Bat

For this craft, you'll need an ordinary clothespin and either black construction paper or black fun foam. Use the following template to make the bat wings and body:



Of course, you will need to enlarge the pattern. You need to have it large enough to cover the clothespin completely. Trace onto the foam or paper and then cut them out.

Lay the clothespin with the clip horizontal and glue on the bat wings. Then place the body on top of the wings. Glue on some googly eyes and you have a fun bat clip. If you want, you can also glue on a small magnet to the other side of the paper clip. Clip these fun bats everywhere and anywhere you can think of! Here's what he should look like when he's done:



(End of sample – actual ebook is over 80 pages)